



Disability: something you are or something others do to you?

People with disabilities and their experiences of barriers and gateways



12-16



6 x 45 min.



white board; projector; copies of the worksheets;



Full participation in public and social life is a human right, for everyone with and without disabilities. This module includes thinking of disability as a norm, work on the lives of personalities with a disability, giving pupils insights into the lifeworlds of people with disabilities, and learning about the multi-faceted character of a range of disabilities. Pupils will also reflect on processes of labelling and find out about the disability pride movement.



Ethics/Religion Political/social studies History Philosophy Language



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Introduction

Background information and didactical perspective

The module begins with an explanation of the key term 'inclusion' and its distinction from other terms of relevance to the discourse. Generally speaking, 'social inclusion' signifies full participation in all facets and areas of society and the right thereto. Translated into the school setting, this means that all pupils, whether with or without disabilities, are taught together and each pupil receives recognition and attention in all her or his diversity and the individual support she or he needs in order to thrive. Inclusive teaching in the classroom takes all the pupils' diverse starting points and learning styles into account and inclusive teachers encourage pupils to learn with and from one another in the group setting. All involved recognise and engage with the diversity they experience in the classroom and learn to value it. When teaching this module, teachers should be careful to avoid assigning any pupils with disabilities the status of 'experts' on the topic or turning them into 'exhibits' for the class. No pupil should feel compelled or forced to discuss their own experiences.

This module uses a variety of interaction patterns, which enable teachers to form heterogeneous groups for pupils to work together. Independent research on the part of pupils and a free choice of presentation methods and techniques take account of individual strengths. When choosing the easy-to-understand videos, we took care to ensure comprehensible subtitling was in place for pupils with hearing loss.

One of this module's learning objectives is to raise pupils' awareness of issues around disability and inclusion. Its intent is to present a picture of the issue that is as true to life, in all its diversity, as possible. This is why it mostly, but not exclusively, uses positive examples relating to people or cultural productions. This is of benefit to all pupils in that it helps counter negatively connotated ideas and conceptions they may previously have held and provides pupils with disabilities with potential role models and options for identification.

The final lesson in the sequence is intended to encourage pupils to call the categories we apply to people into question and consider their own identity with the aid of questions to reflect on. Pupils retain the right at all times to decide for themselves whether and to what extent they wish to disclose their thoughts during the whole-class discussion that forms part of the lesson.

Learning outcomes

Competencies

Skills in forming judgements, comprehending, categorising and assessing information and sources, action; social skills; multiperspectivity; critical analysis of linguistic constructs; recognising mechanisms of discrimination and identifying them in other forms of discrimination; developing individual value judgements characterised by respect for others; media literacy skills; ability to reflect on issues and on our own identity.

Topics / National curriculum

Disabilities; interaction with people with disabilities, sensory disabilities; seeing the world differently; identities and roles; people and their communities; being different; living together in community; discrimination, exclusion and respect for others; our history of living in and with diversity; assisted suicide; opportunities, limitations and risks associated with media

Lesson plan

Abbreviations:

A = Activity

D = Discussion

GW = Group work

IW = Individual work

HW = Homework

PW = Partnerwork

PTS = Previous Teacher's Study

PO = Pupils opinions

PP = Pupil's presentations

TP = Teacher's presentation

Lesson No 1 : What is inclusion?

Phase	Content	Media, Material
Opening phase; initial exploration of concepts (15 min.) A D PO	Preparation <ul style="list-style-type: none">The teacher has set up a projector for a video (M1).The teacher has made a sufficient number of copies of M2 and M3.Internet facilities are available for small-group research. Execution <p>Step 1 As an initial introduction to the topic, the teacher shows the video 'Inclusion of people with disabilities' by the ACT Alliance (M1). The video is in English, but automatic subtitles are available in various languages.</p> <p>Step 2 The teacher hands out a transcript of the video as an aid to understanding it.</p> <p>Step 3 The pupils summarise the video's content.</p> <p>Step 4 The teacher asks pupils for their views on what inclusion means and what we can all do to make it work. The aim here is for pupils to recognise that inclusion is a task for all members of society working together and requires change in established structures. The teacher notes key ideas and issues on the board.</p> <p>Step 5 The teacher asks the pupils to think about anything they have seen in their day-to-day lives and in the world around them which they would consider to be 'inclusion', and to identify any experiences they have had in relation to the topic.</p>	M1 Video What is inclusion? M2 Transcript Inclusion of people with disabilities Additional material <ul style="list-style-type: none">computer with internet access and attached projectorcopies of the worksheets
Transition to the work phase (5 min.) D	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Transitioning to the next phase of the lesson, the teacher asks the pupils to think of examples of famous people who have disabilities.<i>Learning expectations: Teacher should include pupils' views and ensure the discussion remains engaged with their lifeworlds.</i>The next phase involves biographical work on well-known people with disabilities, whose lives present examples of the issues around inclusion.	
Work phase (25 min.) GW	<p>Step 1 The teacher hands out the worksheet on famous personalities (M3) and divides the pupils into small groups.</p> <p>Step 2 After reading through the personalities suggested in the worksheet, each group chooses one, or alternatively makes their own suggestion.</p> <p>Step 3 The teacher ensures each group is working on a different person.</p> <p>Step 4 The groups do internet research on their chosen personality and prepare a two-minute presentation to tell the others who the person is and what they have learned from finding out about their life – particularly any things that surprised them. If the pupils need more time, they can finish work on their presentation at the start of the next lesson.</p> <p>Step 5 The presentations take place in the next lesson.</p>	M3 Worksheet Biographical work: famous personalities Additional material <ul style="list-style-type: none">computer with internet access and attached projectorcopies of the worksheets

Lesson No 2 : Famous personalities

Phase	Content	Media, Material
Work phase (10 min.)	Preparation <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A blackboard or whiteboard is available for making whole-class notes. Execution <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The groups are given a little time to finalise their presentations.	
Pupil's presentations (15 min.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Each group gives a brief presentation on the personality they have chosen. Note <p><i>The teacher may wish to explain to the pupils that disabilities come in various different forms, including physical, motor, social and emotional, sensory, cognitive and psychological difficulties.</i></p>	
Reinforcement of learnings (20 min.)	Step 1 The teacher asks pupils to compare the various personalities they have heard about. Step 2 Discussion starters: <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Is there anything particular you notice when you compare these people? Are there any factors that all their stories have in common?○ Do you think these examples represent successful inclusion? If so, why? If not, why not? What do you think 'successful inclusion' would look like? Step 3 The teacher notes down key points and issues on the board.	

Lesson No 3 : Language matters: an activist's point of view

Phase	Content	Media, Material
Work phase (10 min.) TP	<p>Preparation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">The teacher has made a sufficient number of copies of M4. <p>Execution</p> <p>Step 1 The teacher explains that the lesson is going to revolve around particular terms used casually as insults in day-to-day life and how people feel when they experience these terms as directed against them.</p> <p>Step 2 The teacher hands out copies of the interview with Raul Krauthausen (M4) and asks pupils to read the first part of the interview quietly for themselves.</p>	M4 Interview Talking disability and discrimination: A YouTube interview
Discussion and initial exploration of new concepts (20 min.) D PO	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The teacher should make sure that the pupils do not read the whole interview. When all pupils have finished reading the interview's first part, the teacher initiates a whole-group discussion.Discussion starters:<ul style="list-style-type: none">Tell us what you think about this quotation from the interview: 'If we use words like <i>'retard'</i> [in the original video: <i>behindert</i>] [...] then we don't always understand that language can be incredibly powerful, and just by using these words all the time and minimising what they mean, I think we hurt more people than we intend to.' (Raul Krauthausen)What do you think? Do you use words like that?Can you think of any other words that people might feel are discriminatory (an example might be 'spastic')?¹Learning expectations<ul style="list-style-type: none">Many of the terms which the pupils will volunteer have an insulting, hurtful and discriminatory effect on the people they target. The teacher's job here is to make the group aware of the power of words and encourage them to reflect critically on their use of language.	

Second discussion phase; Reinforcement of learnings (15 min.)

TP D PO

Step 1 The teacher chooses pupils to read out the **second excerpt** from the interview, or reads it out herself/himself.

Step 2 The teacher reflects on the excerpt together with the pupils.

Learning expectations

- It should become evident to the pupils at this point that people with disabilities differ from one another, just like anyone else – they are not a homogeneous mass. They can, and need to, make use of a range of options for full participation in the life of society. People without disabilities have a particular role to play in helping dismantle barriers for people with disabilities so they can access their participatory rights. Everyone can and should consider the language they use, and be aware of, and avoid using words and phrases that could hurt, offend or degrade others.
- The teacher should re-emphasise at this point that ‘disability’ comes into being when someone is discriminated against and disadvantaged by those around them and by their society; before this happens, the person simply has a difficulty or a limitation in a particular area or areas. Inclusiveness is not the sole responsibility of the person with a ‘disability’; instead, it is a matter for the whole of society. Achieving an inclusive world, however, requires the dismantling of barriers – both physical ones (in the architecture of buildings, for example) and processes of exclusion that begin with us excluding others in our thinking. The attainment of rights alone cannot create an inclusive society; the media, employers, schools, and so on all have their part to play – as does each one of us.

Lesson No 4 : Representations of people with disabilities

Phase	Content	Media, Material
Introductory phase (5 min.) TP	Preparation <ul style="list-style-type: none">The teacher has made sufficient numbers of copies of <i>M5-M8</i> for the group work. She or he has prepared by reading the materials, in order to be able to answer any questions the pupils have.Internet facilities are available for the groups to carry out online searches. Execution <p>Step 1 The teacher explains that the lesson will revolve around critical reflection on recent representations and narratives relating to people with disabilities. The pupils split up into four groups, each of which looks at a different representation (book, film, TV series). Pupils may also make suggestions for analysis.</p> <p>Step 2 The teacher provides a brief overview of the protagonists discussed in each of the worksheets (<i>M5-M8</i>).</p> Note <p><i>It is advisable not to mention anything at this stage about the particular format of the narrative (TV series, film, book), as this information may unduly influence the pupils' choice of topic.</i></p> Learning expectations <ul style="list-style-type: none">The intent of the exercise is to support pupils' critical judgement and media literacy skills.	M5 Worksheet Switched at Birth M6 Worksheet Soundcheck M7 Worksheet The Intouchables M8 Worksheet Me Before You
Work phase (40 min.) GW	<p>Step 1 The teacher gives the titles of the worksheets the pupils will now consider, without mentioning what kind of representation each one is (book, film etc.). Each group gives their first and second topic preference and the teacher assigns the materials accordingly.</p> <p>Step 2 The groups work on the tasks assigned and prepare a short presentation.</p>	M5 Worksheet Switched at Birth M6 Worksheet Soundcheck M7 Worksheet The Intouchables M8 Worksheet Me Before You

Lesson No 5 : Representations of people with disabilities

Phase	Content	Media, Material
Pupil's presentations; Reinforcement of learnings (30 min.) PP	<h3>Preparation</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The teacher has organised the technical equipment/facilities that will be necessary for the various groups to give their presentations.• The teacher has made a sufficient number of copies of M9.• In preparation for the lesson, the teacher has read the background information about the video in M9 here.• Prepare a computer with internet access and projector for videos <p>Step 1 Each group of pupils gives a short presentation (max. 5 minutes) on the tasks they had worked on in the previous lesson.</p> <p>Step 2 The teacher makes notes on the board about significant shared factors and differences among the narratives and representations. Issues the teacher might choose to discuss could include the apparent narrative similarity between the films <i>Me Before You</i> and <i>The Intouchables</i>, which on closer examination gives way to a contrast between the messages each film transmits and the circumstances of their making.</p> <p>Step 3 The learnings which emerge from the exercise should include the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Even in our day, people with disabilities seldom feature prominently in cultural productions, and the way these productions depict them is subject to wide variation.○ The messages transmitted in these cultural productions likewise vary markedly, ranging from the portrayal of realistic lifeworlds to depictions centring suffering and other negative connotations of disability.○ As a general principle, the degree to which people with a disability were involved with producing the depiction is proportional to the degree of its authenticity.○ Cultural productions as well as every day conversations and actions should avoid 'talking about' people with disabilities in an unquestioned and unconsidered manner, instead ensuring they are 'talking with' (in both senses of the phrase – being in dialogue with and being alongside, in support of) people with disabilities.	

Closing phase
(20 min.)

TP D PP

Step 1 The teacher now transitions to the closing phase of the lesson, which looks at an example with a political point of reference in order to facilitate critical engagement with the current concept of inclusion and with existing images of people with disabilities in present-day societies. This part of the lesson uses Meryl Streep's speech at the 2017 Golden Globes, specifically her reference to a controversial incident involving Donald Trump. As background reading, we recommend this [article](#).

Step 2 The teacher shows the video featuring the speech (**M10**).

Step 3 The pupils then have the opportunity to discuss it.

Step 4 Discussion starters:

- o Do you think well-known (non-political) personalities should express political opinions?
- o What is the current state of inclusion of people with disabilities in your country? How effective/successful do you think processes of inclusion in your country have been to date?
- o Have you noticed any images of people with disabilities in the media or other cultural productions? What were they like?
- o Is there a difference between 'having a disability' and 'being disabled' (it may be necessary here to draw pupils' attention to the passive form of 'being disabled', which can be read as implying that someone or something is 'disabling' the person)?

Note

It is important for the teacher to re-emphasise here that it is the disadvantaging of people with disabilities at the hands of the individuals and societies around them that brings the status of 'disabled' into being as a state someone is put into by others. Inclusion is not a task for people with disabilities alone, but rather one for the whole of society. If it is to succeed, barriers of all types – ranging from physical ones in built environments to those in people's minds – will need to be overcome. The simple enshrinement of rights in law cannot complete this task; the active involvement of our societal systems - employers, schools, the media, and so on – and of each one of us, with and without disabilities, is essential.

Rounding off
the lesson
(10 min.)

TP PO

Step 1 The teacher concludes the lesson with a quotation from the journalist Jonas Karpa, which she or he writes on the board or whiteboard: „A person's disability is part of their identity. You can't act identity.'

Step 2 The teacher invites pupils to give their thoughts and views on the quotation.

M10
Video Pride

Lesson No 6 : Identity, labels and pride

Phase	Content	Media, Material
Introduction (5 min.) TP	<h3>Preparation</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The teacher has made a sufficient number of copies of M9.• The teacher has organised the equipment required to play a video (M10). <h3>Execution</h3> <p>Step 1 The teacher tells the pupils that the lesson that follows will take a different emphasis from the previous exploration of discriminatory or hurtful language used by others about people with disabilities. At various points, the representations of people with disabilities that the pupils studied for their presentations referred to 'labels' for disabilities, to the way people with disabilities talk about themselves and to pride in an identity centred on a disability. The young Deaf people shown in <i>Switched at Birth</i>, for instance, are proud of belonging to the Deaf community and handle their hearing loss in an affirming way. When is labelling people – putting them into categories – OK? Is it ever OK? And is self-labelling – identifying as LGBTQIA+, for example, or as part of the disability community – different from being 'othered' by people from outside that community?</p> <h3>Note</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Labelling and othering create boundaries and processes of inclusion and – mostly – exclusion. With this in mind, the worksheet centres individuals' reflections on self-labelling and self-identification in their own lives, including intersectional identities.</i>• <i>The Pride concept goes back to the movement for civil rights among LGBTQ people in the US at the end of the 1960s. Today, Pride is about people affirming and celebrating their identities. The concept has now been adopted by people who identify as belonging to a range of groups; as well as LGBTQ Pride, there is Disability Pride and Deaf Pride.</i>	
Work phase; Reinforcement of learnings (25 min.) IW	<p>Step 1 The teacher hands out copies of the worksheet (M9), which includes a section for the pupils to reflect on their own thoughts and views.</p> <p>Step 2 The pupils work through the worksheet on their own.</p> <h3>Note</h3> <p><i>It's OK for some pupils to spend more time working on facts and information about the disability pride movement and its significance, while others focus more closely on their own identity. This means it's not necessary for all pupils to answer all the questions.</i></p>	M9 Worksheet Identity, labels and pride

Reinforcement
of learnings
(10 min.)

D PO TP

Step 1 There follows a whole-class discussion of selected aspects of the questions/tasks in **M9**.

Step 2 Discussion starters:

- Did you find it easy to name the self-chosen identities (including multiple/intersectional ones) of the people in the worksheet? In other words, were you able to locate people (and yourselves) in dimensions of diversity?
- Which dimensions of diversity are relevant to your life, and which are not?
- Does it bother you that these aspects of diversity have an influence on your life?
- What does disability pride mean, in your view?
- Can you see any relationships or references to other pride movements and identities?

Step 3

The teacher ensures that the pupils engage respectfully in discussion and do not denigrate others.

Note

During the discussion, the teacher should consistently remember and emphasise that pupils are free to choose whether and to what extent they engage, particularly when it comes to disclosing the thoughts arising from their self-reflection. She or he makes sure that pupils understand that self-labelling and identification with a particular group are not compulsory and not something anyone can do 'right' or 'wrong'. There are plenty of reasons both for and against identifying with a particular group. It can, for example, help someone develop and affirm their identity; but it can also set limits on their self-realisation (this might happen, for example, with an LGBTQIA+ identity) or on their perceptions of others. Everyone has the right to decide these issues for themselves and nobody has to justify or explain themselves to anyone else in this regard.

M9
Worksheet Identity,
labels and pride

Rounding off
the lesson
(5 min.)

TP

Step 1 The teacher closes the lesson by reminding pupils that someone with a disability can take pride in that disability as a part of their own identity, even though it may cause them difficulties and problematic experiences from time to time. This is what 'disability pride' means.

Step 2 The teacher shows the class the video 'Pride', which looks at self-acceptance, identity, and pride in that identity, and communicates an affirming, empowering message. (The subtitles to the video are available in various languages). In so doing, the teacher ends the unit on an emphatic, upbeat note.

M10
Video Pride

M1 Video What is inclusion?

The short video '*Inclusion of people with disabilities*' is an introduction to inclusion in this context.

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rjluLV1F-UI> (02:31 min.)

Sources:

'Inclusion of people with disabilities', ACT Alliance, YouTube
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rjluLV1F-UI>

M2 Transcript Inclusion of people with disabilities

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rjluLV1F-UI> (02:31 min.)

“We explain why the inclusion of people with disabilities is good for everyone.

Meet Sara. She is a smart girl who loves to sing and help her mother to cook. When she grows up, she wants to be a teacher and get married.

Sara has cerebral palsy, caused by partial damage to the brain, and therefore uses a wheelchair to move around.

She is an outgoing person and whenever she needs help, she asks for it.

But while Sara can do most things herself she faces many barriers. Some people’s attitudes as well as physical and economic barriers make life difficult for Sara. They say she can’t be in a choir. And so far no school has accepted her.

If Sara can’t go to school, she won’t find a job. And without a job she will always be dependent on others. This is not only a waste of her skills – it is a violation of her right to proper education.

But what can be done? It’s not that hard. Everybody around Sara can help her to live her life to the fullest and gain back her rights. We need to raise awareness, for example in education programmes. That way Sara’s community understands the nature of her disability.

After setting up a local support group for parents of children with disabilities, Sara’s mother can share her experience with others. Now the head teacher of the closest school knows that it is Sara’s right, like any other child, to be educated well. Teachers can get disability-specific training and support from a resource centre when needed.

And we need to reduce physical barriers. Building wider doorways and wheelchair ramps benefits the elderly, too. When given appropriate materials, people with visual impairments can study anything.

With fewer barriers, a proper education and awareness in the community Sara has the same chance as others of getting the job she wants. Instead of depending on others she is appreciated for who she really is: a person of many abilities.

Whether someone uses a wheelchair, lives with a vision or hearing problems, or has an intellectual or other disability – let’s make sure our society includes them.

For more information on what you can do, get in touch with us!”

Sources:

‘Inclusion of people with disabilities’, ACT Alliance, YouTube
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rjluLV1F-UI>

M3 Worksheet Biographical work: famous personalities

Tasks

1. Choose one of the personalities below (or another well-known person you know of who has a disability) and find out about their life:

Musicians

Ludwig van Beethoven (composer)
Bekim (rapper and comedian)
Rudely Interrupted (band)
Stevie Wonder (singer and pianist)

Actors

Sean Berdy
Katie Leclerc
Marlee Matlin
R. J. Mitte
Ali Stroker
Luisa Wölisch

Sports personalities

Verena Bentele (biathlete; former German Federal Government Commissioner for Matters relating to Persons with Disabilities)
Derrick Coleman (American footballer)
Henrieta Farkašová (alpine skier)
Aaron Fotheringham (extreme wheelchair athlete)
Vanessa Low (athlete)
Heinrich Popow (athlete)
Markus Rehm (athlete)
Miha Zupan (basketball player)

Your own suggestion

2. Prepare a presentation of about two minutes on your chosen personality, to tell the rest of the class about her or him.

M4 Interview Talking disability and discrimination: A YouTube interview

The text that follows comes from an interview between the YouTuber MrTrashpack, the activist Raul Krauthausen, and the influencer and internet video producer Simon Unge, published on MrTrashpack's YouTube channel. Raul, a disability activist, talks about himself and his work in the interview.

Excerpt 1

Raul Krauthausen

I'm Raul. I'm from Berlin and I set up a campaigning group 10 years ago called 'Sozialhelden'. We spend a lot of time on the internet and have a lot of online projects, like 'wheelmap', which is an online map for wheelchair-accessible places where you can rate how wheelchair-accessible your neighbourhood is – as you can see, I'm a wheelchair user, and I've been using Twitter since, I think, 2007, or about 2009 [...].

[...]

Simon Unge

Well, we actually got to know each other through a funny mistake [I made]. I'd written to another friend on Twitter, called 'Knuspertoast'... We'd had an episode [of his YouTube videos] where I had to do a forfeit, and he wrote 'Why don't you eat a Chicken McNugget as a forfeit?' and I wrote back 'are you a retard or something [the original German is bist du behindert, literally 'are you disabled'], as if I'd do a thing like that' [Simon is famously vegan], something like that, anyway. And Raul had been following me for a while and he'd watched a couple of my videos now and then, and he read that, and he wrote to me that that wasn't cool, he thought it wasn't OK. And that was what made me stop and think – he was right; just writing something like that... There are people with a disability who feel really offended by that sort of stuff. So we talked about it. And I wrote straight away, so my viewers didn't get the wrong idea: 'You're spot on, my fingers must have been faster than my brain' - it's just become so much a part of how people talk that you don't often think about [what you're saying]. I took his criticism directly to heart and said straight away, yep, you're absolutely right. We got talking about it and said why don't we do a video together about this, because I think lots of people are like this, not really thinking about it, and now here we are.

Raul Krauthausen

[...] I didn't want this to get so big, I just wanted to see... I knew you didn't mean it like that, but you just said it, and you reach so many people, maybe we could do a cool video together or something. It doesn't really matter whether it's me or other people on YouTube who have a disability, they could put this across just as well [as me]. But, I just think, because you said on Twitter as well, oh yeah, you're right, I didn't really think, that was absolutely big of you, and I think that you can show people that, that you can admit your mistakes and learn from them, and that we can say, yes, we're not perfect, but let's try and see if we can get perfect. If we use words like 'retard' [behindert] or other words, like 'gay' or 'homo' or whatever, then we don't always understand that language can be incredibly powerful, and just by using these words all the time and minimising what they mean, I think we hurt more people than we intend to.

Excerpt 2

Raul Krauthausen

[...] Another thing I think is really interesting is when is disability actually a thing. [...] of course I have a disability, I'm a person of short stature, I've got brittle bone disease for anyone who's interested, but if I think about myself, for instance, I'm not thinking 'oh my God, I have a disability', and I don't cry myself to sleep and wake up still crying, or anything like that; instead, I only notice I'm disabled when, like I said, there's no lift, and then there's the question, am I disabled or am I being disabled, and doesn't disability actually happen when those two things come together. And we define disability, but always as something negative, like we use it as an insult or we say things like 'is confined to a wheelchair' or 'suffers from brittle bone disease' and things like that, but my wheelchair means freedom for me, I'd be confined without a wheelchair.

Sources:

'Das ist voll behindert! Behinderungen, Jugendsprache, Diskriminierung (Mit Unge u. Raul K.)', MrTrashpack, YouTube
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L_Miv0ZNKfg

M5 Worksheet Switched at Birth

Switched at Birth is a successful US television drama series which tells the real-life story of Bay Kennish and Daphne Vasquez, two girls who discover at the age of sixteen that they were 'switched at birth' and have grown up ever since in the other family, in completely different areas and lifeworlds. Alongside issues relevant to almost any teenager, the series explores the theme of deafness, giving viewers insights into Deaf culture and the lives of people like Daphne, who lost her hearing after falling ill with meningitis.

Links for your research

You can use the links below to help you in your research – and of course you can find more information online.

- Teaser (English): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E-rtS0iR_Cw
- Daphne in her new school (English): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y9WVPHiNSM>
- 'Not hearing loss, deaf gain' (ASL with English subtitles): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F5W604uSkrk>
- Who's speaking for whom? (English): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xi8M08330jE>
- The Richness of being Deaf but also the Target' (ASL with English subtitles): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aoRRt4mJd04>
- Teaser (German): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CG9JLjcKgYs>
- ‚Die Verwechslung‘ (Teaser German): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JBhkJJvZHs0>
- Season 1 (Summary, German): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sbNxjE9iFXc&list=PLwRo_ZL2Y27T5LbMghiyh2CK70SAxAeug&index=10

Tasks

1. Describe the images and narratives presented in the videos (choose the version in your preferred language). How do they depict disability and people with disabilities?

2. Do some research to find out whether people with disabilities acted in or were involved in producing the series.



3. What did you like about the clips from the series? What would you have done differently if you had made them?



M6 Worksheet Soundcheck

Soundcheck is a young adult novel by the German author Elisabeth Gänger. Its protagonist is Cindy, who attends an academically selective mainstream school (at a time before 'inclusion' at schools was on the public or educational agenda) and is usually left out by the others. These excerpts from the book describe Cindy's experience in a school life which takes some getting used to.

Mr B. arrived, and with him the usual depressing stuff. Usually, the first day back at school began with some people from the class telling everyone else what they'd done in the holidays. But today it looked as if Mr B. was doing all the talking. He looked at the clock a few times while he was speaking – no idea what he was planning. I was usually the last to find out stuff like that – if I found it out at all. I'm hearing impaired. I don't know why, but I always think the 'impaired' bit sounds sort of funny. It always makes me think of a car that has an engine problem, but still works. Sometimes I'm not sure if I work well enough. My hearing impairment is so bad that if I was a car, they'd probably take me straight to the scrapyards. [...]

I'd been sitting next to Tabea in class since Year One. That might have been why she got on my nerves so much. Although she was the only one who ever told me a bit about what was going on in class. Loads of other girls had been Tabea's friend over the years, but they usually only lasted a few weeks. I'd never had another friend. I was sure that the others didn't like me because I always need to be told what I have to do two or three times and they thought that meant I was stupid. [...]

The only thing at school I hated more than dictation was what Mr Garlich called 'Word Countdown'. Mr Garlich was our English teacher, and going by the number of times Molly and Dad had had to call him and ask for at least a minimal amount of consideration for me, we could only imagine that he'd have been thrilled to see me packed off to a special school for hearing defectives like me. In Word Countdown the whole class had to stand up and Mr Garlich started mumbling vocab. The first person to translate a word correctly could sit down. And those unlucky enough not to hear what Mr Garlich was mumbling got to stay standing up. I was usually the last one standing. [...] Just before the summer holidays, something happened that Molly called my moment of triumph. Mr Garlich was standing right near me when he announced we were going to have a Word Countdown. I think he must have just trimmed his beard, because I could see his upper lip and I could even half-hear him starting with the word *Rücksicht*. So I shouted out 'Consideration!', I guess before any of the others, because Mr Garlich suddenly looked so flabbergasted [...]. But right after the Countdown it was dictation. I mean, dictation was bad enough in German. I always ended up writing *Schirm* [umbrella] instead of *Schwert* [sword] and stuff like that. I didn't even need to bother trying in a foreign language. My dictation never got graded. I just copied from Tabea, and nudged her whenever I saw she'd made a mistake. But that day, after the Word Countdown, she suddenly put her arm between us. 'Why should I help you?', she asked. 'You were better than me in the vocab.' [...]

I hated shopping. Because something always happened that I wasn't expecting. And now I had to get a packet of Persil for Molly. I got her to count out the money for me down to the last cent, so I didn't end up having embarrassing questions from the cashier about did I have the right money and all that. In the shop I picked up the washing powder and a magazine and queued up to pay. I nearly dropped my six euros seventy-nine when I saw Aline over at the bakery counter. She was talking to an older boy [...]. I was in a huge panic that she might be able to see me. It was annoyingly noisy in the supermarket. Probably some stupid music blasting out of the speakers as usual. [...] I shook out my money into the cashier's hand and hurried out. A sales assistant I ran past seemed to be shouting something to me, but I just looked away. Outside, I was already jumping on my bike when I felt someone pulling vigorously on my sleeve. Aline. She was holding up a 50 cent piece and said loudly: 'Look! You paid too much. But they couldn't really call you back easily, could they?' Embarrassed, I turned round again to look at the supermarket. One of the signs at the entrance announced that Persil was on offer this week. [...]

On Tuesday we had a Word Check. That meant translating twenty words that Mr Garlich said in German into English and handing in your paper. Most of the time I didn't even know what the German word was supposed to be, but luckily Tabea always wrote down on the desk what Mr Garlich had dictated. She hardly ever bothered learning vocab. Because she helped me understand what was wanted, she got to use my answers. It was like that in all subjects, except with essays, when we'd swap books quickly at the end so I could correct her worst mistakes. Aline came over to us in the five minutes between lessons. She said that had been a bit rubbish just now. Garlich could have written the German words up on the board instead of saying them. Then I'd have had the same chance as the others – at least in a Word Check. 'But what would be the point of that?', asked Tabea [...]. 'It works, doesn't it?' 'Yes, because you help her', answered Aline. 'But Cindy could do just as well on her own. She'd just need to know what he was saying. [...]

Watching a film in school was as frustrating as having Word Countdown or dictation. The voice of whoever was speaking usually crashed in such a horrible way against the walls that I ended up switching off my hearing aids after the actors had said their first few lines. And of course my notes [on what had happened in the film] were of corresponding quality. I'd probably end up writing about today's film that it involved a few amateur actors dressed up in Stone Age costumes trying to drill holes in a rock. Weird. It was actually Mr Kraus that took us for history, and we were on the Thirty Years' War anyway. Mr Bender was probably just covering the lesson. But why was he showing us this prehistoric nonsense? I noted down – accurately – that the actors' animal skins looked like cheap fakes and their acting was the worst [...] I'd ever seen. [...] Now the film had made a giant leap into the present. We could see bikes and turbines and I just ended up looking at Tabea with less and less of a clue about what was going on. Tabea was swapping notes all the time, with Selma and Jennifer. [...] After the lesson I asked her if she could show me her notes on the film before the next history lesson. 'What do you mean, history? That was physics just now.' 'Can't be', I said, thinking. 'We don't have physics on Wednesdays.' 'Oh, you poor thing!', she said, doing a facepalm. 'Didn't you know? Mr. B swapped the lessons over! [...]"

Source:

Gänger, Elisabeth. Soundcheck, Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag junior, 2004

Tasks

1. Describe the images and narrative forms used by the excerpts. How do they depict disability and people with disabilities?

2. Suggest some ideas for making things more inclusive at school for Cindy.



3. 'You can tell that the author is a parent to a child with hearing loss.' – Do you think that is an accurate statement? Why (or why not)?



M7 Worksheet The Intouchables

Philippe and Driss, the two protagonists of this French autobiographical comedy, couldn't be more different. While Philippe was raised in a wealthy aristocratic family, Driss is from a deprived background. They meet when Philippe needs a new career and Driss takes the job because there aren't any other options.

Links

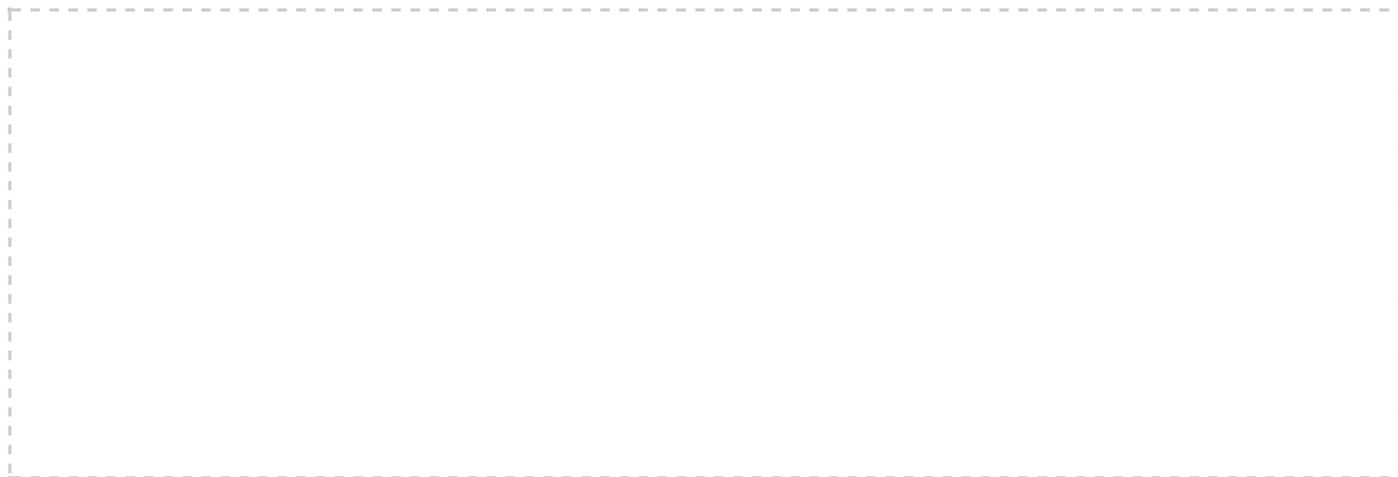
- **Trailer:**
 - EN: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=34WlbnXkewU>
 - DE: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tveZPR3Tv1A>
 - IT: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_7WCl7aafGg
- **Documentary:**
 - DE: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1XQigajNSHM>
- **Rosie Jones**
 - EN: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=53nRcfosYR0>, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosie_Jones_\(comedian\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosie_Jones_(comedian))

Tasks

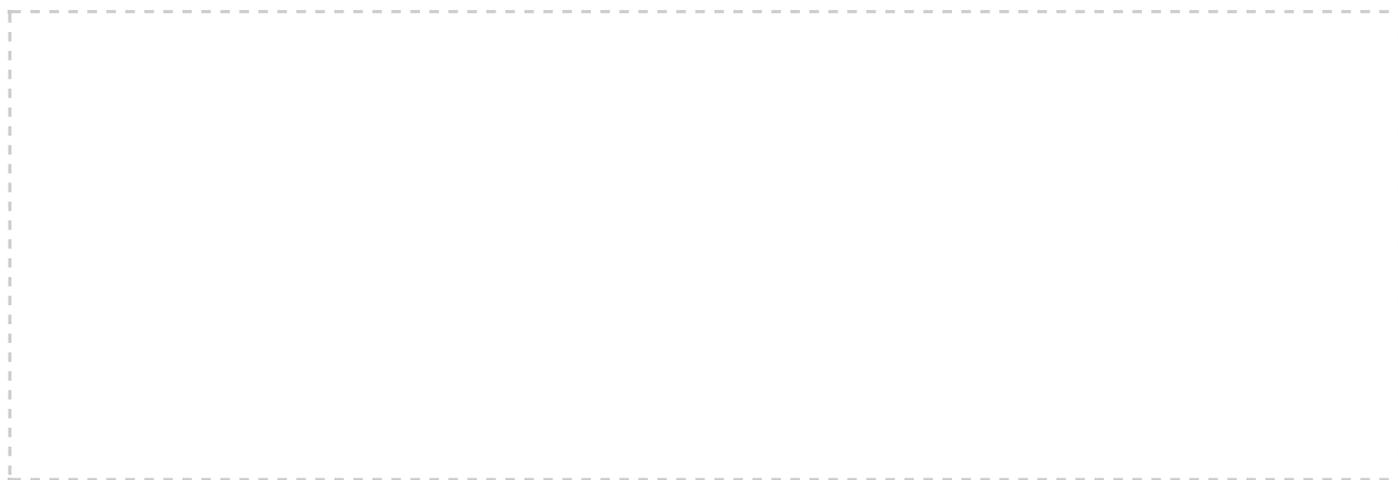
1. Describe how the film depicts disability and people with disabilities. Use the links (below) in your preferred language.

2. Find out whether people with disabilities acted in the film or were involved in its making.

3. The film takes a comic approach to the topic of disability. The British comedian Rosie Jones, who is disabled herself, also includes disability in her routines. What do you think about comedy and disability? Where are the limits?



4. Find some more links to go with the ones below. Don't forget that you won't have time to watch everything you find in full. You could divide up the links among yourselves.



M8 Worksheet Me Before You

Me Before You, a bestselling novel by Jojo Moyes, was made into a Hollywood film soon after its publication. Its two protagonists are Louisa Clark and Will Traynor. Will, having become paralysed from the neck down after an accident, relies on care for his day-to-day needs. Louisa, a stranger to him, becomes his paid companion.

Links

- **Trailer:**

- EN: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T0MmkG_nG1U
- DE: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lxDCx2f_208
- IT: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LY4I0TXv8aA>
- EN/PL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5pZ8J-f_fko

- **Interview with the Director:**

- EN: <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2016/may/22/me-before-you-film-love-disability-thea-sharrock-sam-claflin>

- **Zeit Online Blog:**

- DE: <http://blog.zeit.de/stufenlos/2016/06/02/hauptrolle-behindert-und-lebensmuede/>

- **Critics:**

- EN: <https://www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/2016/06/me-before-you-disabled-community-controversy>
<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2016/jun/02/me-before-you-disabled-backlash-not-pitied>
- DE: <http://thabs.de/ein-ganzes-halbes-jahr-krit>
http://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/kritik-an-film-ein-ganzes-halbes-jahr-gefuehlvolles-drama.2156.de.html?dram:article_id=357948

Tasks

1. How does the film depict disability and people with disabilities?

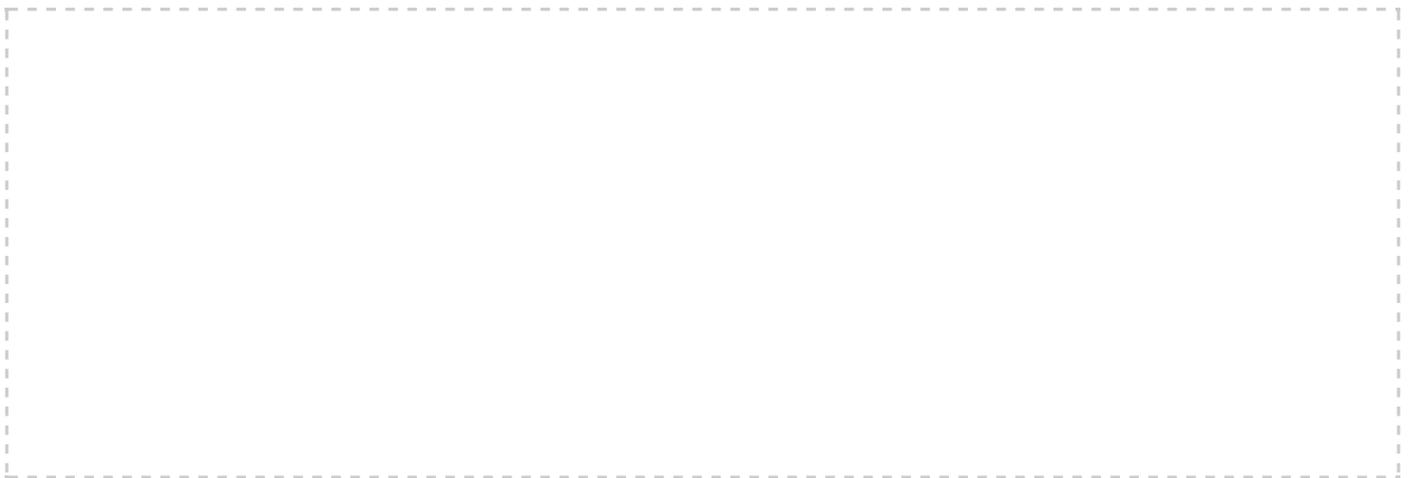
2. Find out whether people with disabilities acted in the film or were involved in its making.



3. Consider (and write down) what different perspectives there might be on the film's plot and its central message.



4. You might want to find some more links to go with the ones below.



M9 Worksheet Identity, labels and pride

Inclusion is a human right, a vital, necessary and enriching aspect of a society. Some people with disabilities choose freely to identify with their disability and express that identity in an affirming, confident manner. This voluntary, self-chosen act of identification with a particular group or community indicates a sense of belonging to that group or community. Someone will only be able to identify like this if they accept their disability and are able to approach it openly. People can also identify with other aspects of themselves, such as their sexual orientation. This kind of self-applied label is absolutely OK. Labelling becomes a problem when people do it to other people, by putting them in a particular 'box' or category, or when it is structural in character. Paradoxically, labelling happens during processes whose aim is to realise inclusion, such as consideration of special circumstances at school, affirmative action in recruitment to jobs, or access to mainstream education for children with disabilities. 'Labelling' is necessary in cases like these, to ensure people can exercise their rights to education, work and participation in society. Researchers recognise various forms, or 'categories'/'dimensions', of societal diversity. They include (but are not limited to):

- disability
- religious or philosophical belief
- sex and gender
- sexual orientation
- ethnic/cultural heritage (belonging to an immigrant or minority community)
- age
- skin colour
- language
- socio-economic background¹

The questions that follow are intended to help you think about how you relate to these categories. Read the passages on the next page carefully. Then spend some time thinking about them, reflecting on yourself and your identity. You can and should always be proud of who you are. You're the one who decides what's part of your identity and what isn't – nobody else gets to decide that for you.

Some people with disabilities speak of 'disability pride' to refer to their confident self-identification as part of a disability community. What does this mean exactly? Do other communities have a similar 'pride'? And what might this type of pride mean to you? Let's find out.

¹ This means the level of educational attainment and the income situation in your family.

"You will always learn more about yourself every day; be vulnerable and keep analysing how you feel to show who you really are."

– Sandra Mae Frank

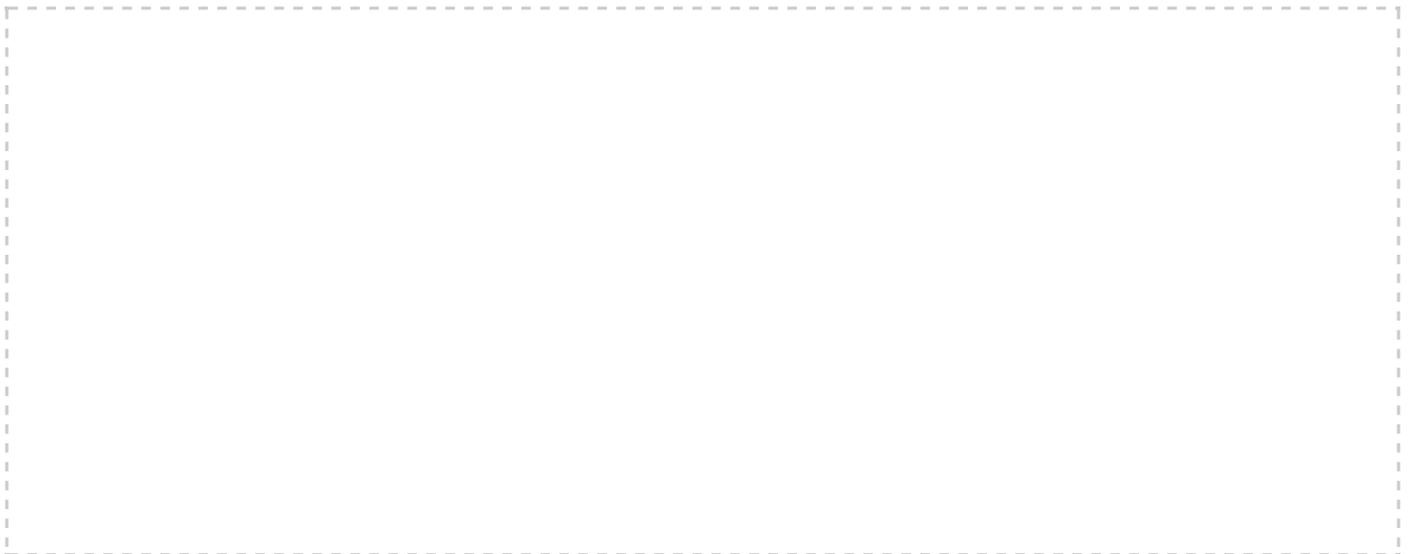
Your answers to the questions that follow are just for you. During the class discussion that will happen afterwards, you can choose what, and how much, you would like to reveal about your thoughts and reflections.

Questions for reflection:

1. Diversity in society has various aspects, such as disability, religion, national or cultural heritage, and socio-economic background. Note down the aspects of diversity which you personally identify with. Think about why these aspects in particular are significant to you and relevant to your life.



2. Have you ever been 'labelled' by someone else? How did you feel about it? Did you feel that the people doing the labelling had prejudices about you? Have you ever experienced discrimination because of this label?



3. In the passages below, various people talk about their identities and their experience. Do you identify with a particular 'label' or community? Why (or why not)?

4. Have you spent any time finding out about pride movements (such as LGBTQIA+ pride²)? Do you know what 'pride' means in this context? The passages below tell you more about it – what it means at a general level and what it means to each of the people whose voices and views you will read.

Passage 1:

I grew up in various places [...] across the globe, as the child of a Jamaican father and a German mother. Wherever we were, my skin was always the “wrong” colour – sometimes too light, sometimes too dark. The idea of “pride” in one’s heritage, in the colour of one’s skin, or even in one’s body, was one I associated, if anything, with people who held extreme right-wing views – sort of like, if you haven’t got anything else to show for your life, you fall back on being proud of your nationality. [I know that was] pretty simplistic and narrow-minded [of me], but that was the way I thought back then. (...) I made peace with my “identity” and the colour of my skin early on, when I was still a teen. (...) Then, when I was 26, multiple sclerosis^{1} decided to gatecrash my life. (...) So anyway, I went through what many people go through when disability happens to them at some point in their lives. I grieved, for my health, my body, my life, my hopes and dreams. After around two years of tears and fury, I came to terms with my new situation (...) I thought I’d accepted my body and my disability, but it turned out not to be the case. I always tried to distinguish myself from “the disabled”. I took “You’re not like other disabled people” as a compliment. (...) So then I started thinking about things. Most of all, that comment “You’re not like other disabled people” was familiar to me somehow. “You’re not really Black, after all”; “Yes, but YOU’RE different”. That was when I understood. Maybe racism and xenophobia aren’t really that different from disablism. The thinking behind them is almost always the same, and the impact is probably the same too.

So I became aware that I had just pushed my disability aside, rather than accepting it. (...) Then I stumbled upon disability pride. My first reaction was one of amused derision. There they are again, those prejudices. The idea of being proud of my disability and even celebrating it weirds me out. (...) My wrong type of pride and my prejudices still have a long way to go.'

Davina Ellis

Sources:

Ellis, Davina. Stolz und Vorurteil (Pride and Prejudice), Die Neue Norm
<https://dieneuenorm.de/kolumne/pride-and-prejudice-stolz-und-vorurteil/>

Passage 2:

'I am no longer ashamed of my deafness, I am proud of it. I am proud of who I am, proud of what I've overcome, and proud of my culture. Yes, I recognize there is a Deaf culture. (...) Being a part of this culture has given me a sense of pride. I am no longer alone. (...) Last but not least, I bask in pride when I see Deaf people becoming more and more successful in the world. (...) It is a feeling of pride and support which pushes us on. (...) So yes, as far as I'm concerned, there is such a thing as Deaf Pride. It exists for me, and it's the spark which changed my life. (...)'

Mark Drolsbaugh

Sources:

Drolsbaugh, Mark. What is Deaf Pride?; Deaf Info
<https://deaf-info.zak.co.il/d/deaf-info/old/deffman-pride.html>

Passage 3:

'I became a wheelchair user at the age of 22. I'd been a lesbian and a feminist for a while by that time. I know how, time and again, people shamed me for my disability. How they expected me to be a good disabled person and seek a "cure". How they gave me the feeling of not being OK as I am. Nobody should have to be ashamed of their sexual orientation, and exactly the same goes for a disability. It's no coincidence that the Pride parades for a confident disabled identity were inspired by the idea behind Gay Pride parades. (...) When it comes to treatments and therapies for us people with disabilities, we should always ask which ones have the primary purpose of making us look as "non-disabled" as possible so that supposedly "normal" people don't feel uncomfortable around us. And which treatments really increase our freedom and our options for self-determined action. Are your blind friend's dark glasses really for her benefit? Or are they only for the benefit of those who aren't used to looking a blind person in the eyes?'

Kassandra Ruhm

Sources:

Ruhm, Kassandra. Scham und Stolz (Shame and Pride), Die Neue Norm
<https://dieneuenorm.de/kolumne/von-scham-und-stolz/>

Passage 4:

'I'm proud to be Deaf and Queer, because THAT's who I am. (...) I would always say I have no labels. I believe love is love. (...) But I admit that something inside me was missing. I just didn't know until two years ago. Someone mentioned the term 'pansexual' and I was struck by that. As I analyzed that word and myself, I realized, YES! That is who I am! That fits exactly what I feel. (...) The second I embraced that, the second I was able to express myself openly and clearly (...). I finally felt complete.'

Sandra Mae Frank

Sources:

Frank, Sandra Mae. Proud to be Deaf + Queer!, YouTube
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F2S62esjWXA>

² LGBTQIA+ stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Intergender and Asexual identity, with the plus sign representing those identities not covered by these terms. 'Queer' is a term for all sexual orientations and gender identities that do not fit into the heterosexual/binary 'norm'.

³ Multiple sclerosis is a chronic inflammatory disease of the central nervous system (brain and spinal cord). Its effects vary from individual to individual; in most instances, it can cause difficulties with walking and balance, vision problems, fatigue, loss of sensation or 'pins and needles' in the arms or legs, and paralysis.

M10 Video Pride

The music video to the song 'Pride' by American Authors centres on disability pride; its message is that you should never let others discourage you and that you should be proud of who you are. In the video, the award-winning actor Sandra Mae Frank translates the song's lyrics into ASL (American Sign Language), enabling people with hearing loss to follow it.

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7bAaN-LCcHI> (03:38 min.)

Sources:

American Authors: 'Pride (Radio Mix / American Sign Language Video)'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7bAaN-LCcHI>